

BUNBURY PORT — GRAIN TRANSPORT

118. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the commencement of the construction of the export facilities for Bunge Agribusiness Australia at Bunbury port following approval for 500 000 tonnes of grain to be exported annually from this facility.

- (1) Did the minister consult with the Shires of Collie and West Arthur before the decision was made to transport grain through those shires?
- (2) What assessments on the Coalfields highway between Arthur River and Collie were undertaken by Main Roads before the approvals were given?
- (3) Which roads or highways will the bulk of the grain transport trucks use to access Bunbury port; and, will these highways require improvements to ensure safe passage?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member Collie–Preston for the question. I assume he supports the export of wheat through Bunbury port.

Mr M.P. Murray: I certainly support the road upgrade, yes.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I think it is a really good outcome for farmers in regional Western Australia because it means grain producers can have choice when it comes to determining who will handle, transport and ship bulk grain. I think that is a good outcome and we will finally get some competition in that aspect of —

Point of Order

Mr M.P. MURRAY: My point of order is about the question. The question I asked was about the roads, not about the grain itself.

The SPEAKER: Minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The point I was simply trying to make is that this is an important step forward for farmers. It is an important step forward to introduce competition into grain handling. The grain that will be exported by Bunge out of Bunbury will be transported, in the first instance, by road—approximately 500 000 tonnes per annum. How it gets there is yet to be fully determined because it will depend on the farmers from whom Bunge procure that grain. On the balance of probabilities, a fair proportion of that grain will use the Coalfields highway and the extension through to Darkan, and I will get back to that in a second. There is also a probability that some of that grain will come up South Western Highway and trucks will be able to use the new entry into Bunbury port through the Bunbury outer bypass stage 1, which is currently under construction, and the extension of the port access road—two important road projects undertaken by this government in the south west. Some of that grain may travel down the Forrest Highway to Bunbury. It really depends on the decisions of farmers. However, it will impact on Collie–Coalfields highway. The good news is that this government, unlike the Labor government for the eight years that it sat on this side of this place, is investing money in the Collie–Coalfields highway.

I go through some of that detail. As the member for Collie–Preston is aware, we have already committed \$25 million to that road. Some of that money has been spent and some will be spent when the balance of that state forest exemption is taken out of state forest and becomes road reserve. That is a great outcome, for not only heavy-transport users bringing grain down the hill into Bunbury and taking their trucks back up there, but also the people the member represents in this Parliament, because that piece of road will be made safer and for the first time in a long time Collie–Coalfields highway will be upgraded. But there is more than that because we have also made commitments to continue the upgrade of the Collie–Coalfields highway. If my memory serves me correctly, there is another \$28 million—\$22 million to continue the work up around Collie between the Wellington Dam turn-off and Collie and another \$6 million to put a decent passing lane as people come up the hill at Roelands. These are fantastic outcomes for the people of Collie and, more generally, the people of the south west. It will mean that that road can do what roads should do—that is, facilitate transport to and from the port. There is still some work to be done on the road between Collie and Darkan. My parliamentary secretary, Hon Jim Chown, was in Darkan a week or two ago talking to the local council about that very issue and we will work with the council to provide the necessary upgrades to that road from Collie through to Darkan and from Darkan through to Wagin. I will conclude with this: one of the reasons we can do that is that this government made the bold decision to increase funding for regional roads, because we are taking a significant amount of the money that people donate to government at speed and red-light cameras and investing it in upgrading regional roads, and some of that will go into upgrading not only the road between Collie and Darkan but also, I suspect, Collie and Wagin to the east. This is a great outcome. It is a great outcome for the port of Bunbury, it is a great

outcome for farmers who will start to have choice and it is a great outcome for the people of the town the member for Collie–Preston represents in this place, because at long last someone is spending money on the road that matters so much to them.